UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Mark A. Emmert, President

March 22, 2006

The Honorable Greg Nickels
Mayor of Seattle
Seattle City Hall
600 Fourth Avenue, 7th Floor
P.O. Box 94749
Seattle, WA 98124-4749

Dear Mayor Nickels:

I applaud your leadership in encouraging local actions to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change is one of the most significant challenges of our time, and the scientific consensus is that most of the observed global warming in temperatures over the last 50 years is likely to have been due to the human-induced increase in greenhouse gas concentrations.

These global changes in temperature have local impacts. A recent report by the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group summarized many important changes we have seen and expect to see in the Puget Sound region due to global climate change, including the following:

- Average annual air temperature in the Puget Sound region warmed 2.3°F (1.3°C) during the 20th century.
- Projected 21st century average warming rates for the Pacific Northwest are on the order of 1.8°F (1.0°C) by the 2020s and 3.0°F (1.7°C) by the 2040s, relative to 1970-1999 average air temperature.
- Scientists project that Puget Sound waters will warm in the future, altering the characteristics of the Puget Sound food web and potentially putting many species at risk.
- More of the region's winter precipitation is likely to fall as rain rather than snow, increasing flooding in Puget Sound watersheds.
- With decreased snowpack and earlier snowmelt, western Washington's typical low summer stream flows are likely to be further reduced, while winter stream flows rise. These changes can lead to altered habitat for fish and other species and can stress municipal and agricultural water supplies dependent on snowmelt.
- The rate of sea-level rise in the Pacific Northwest is projected to be faster than the global average, and is likely to increase both the pace and extent of the erosion and nearshore habitat loss already affecting Puget Sound shorelines, especially in south Puget Sound.

As you know, the University of Washington is committed to reducing its impact on the environment; protecting health and safety; supporting local, state, and global communities through research and education; and contributing to Washington's economy. The UW embraces its important leadership role regionally and nationally to be an environmentally, economically, and socially responsible institution. As such, we have a long history of actions that emphasize the stewardship of our state's natural and financial resources. In 1988 we converted our coal-fired power plant to the much cleaner burning natural gas in order to significantly reduce particulate and other emissions from the facility. In addition, the UW was among the first institutions in the United States to install large HVAC Chillers which use non-chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) refrigerants. This was part of a push to eliminate ozone-depleting substances. The University also participates in Seattle City Light's Green Up program so that 100% of the electricity we purchase comes from renewable sources.

Recognizing that this leadership is fundamental to ensure a legacy for the future and to protect the healthy and safe learning and working environments valued by the UW, we look forward to working with the founding partners of a partnership, including the City of Seattle, to promote the community-wide goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 7% below 1990 levels by 2012.

Sincerely yours,

Mark A. Emmert
President